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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0715  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1626  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2051  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4124  
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, G, S/OGAC, OES  
PACOM FOR FPA  
BANGKOK FOR USAID HEALTH OFFICE  
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO USAID/AME

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TAGS: SOCI EAID PHUM KHIV PGOV SENV BM

SUBJECT: INFORMING BURMA OFFICIALS ABOUT USG VIEWS ON  
GLOBAL FUND

REF: A. EAP/MLS/SCHEIBE-CDA DINGER E-MAIL OF 10/29/08  
    1B. STATE 115494  
    1C. STATE 105179  
    1D. RANGOON 786  
    1E. RANGOON 842

Classified By: CDA Larry Dinger for Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

Summary

11. (C) As authorized (Ref A), Embassy Rangoon has conveyed USG views to the regime on a potential Burma Round 9 Global Fund (GF) application. In conversations with Minister of Health Dr. Kyaw Myint, Deputy Minister of Health Dr. Mya Oo, and MOFA Americas Director Yin Yin Oo, the Charge relayed Ref B and C points, emphasizing the need for the GOB to address satisfactorily and up front the issues that caused the GF to terminate its Burma program in 2005, including access to all GF sites, currency conversion procedures, tax exemption policies, and safeguards ensuring no GF monies flow through the regime. The Health Minister and his deputy clearly received the message and said they would do their best to ensure that, this time, the Government of Burma would do its utmost to meet GF requirements. End Summary.

Minister of Health

12. (C) On October 24 at a reception following a UN Day event at Nay Pyi Taw, the Minister of Health approached the Charge. A few days before, as instructed in Ref C, Charge had conveyed USG preliminary views about a potential Burma GF application to a group of bilateral donors and UN officials who had gathered to select the donor representative to the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) (see Ref D). The Minister clearly had received reports of USG views from the donor community. Charge sketched USG views directly to the Minister, noting the U.S. recognition of the need for assistance in Burma, but raising all the points of concern. The Minister said his Government wants to apply for Round 9, intends to comply with GF rules and regulations, but will not submit an application if the USG intends to oppose it. The Minister said neither he nor his Government wants to be "embarrassed" by rejection (see Ref E).

13. (C) On November 3, while preparing for the visit to Rangoon of Senate Appropriations Committee staff member Paul

Grove, Charge phoned the Minister of Health seeking a meeting for Grove. The Minister said that, unfortunately, he would be in China during Grove's November 8-10 visit. Charge took the opportunity to reiterate USG views concerning a Burma GF application, as laid out in Ref B. The Minister said he understood the message, including the need under GF rules to address satisfactorily in the application itself issues of past concern. He said he hopes all concerns can be satisfactorily resolved, and he pledged his support for the effort. (Note: during Grove's visit, we heard from the Save the Children Country Director that the Minister was "shaken" by the phone conversation. The Save the Children Country Director congratulated Charge for conveying points others would like to emphasize but can't, given the delicacy of their positions in Burma.) Charge asked if a Deputy Minister could meet with Grove, since the Minister would be away. The Minister agreed to look into that possibility.

The Americas Director

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¶ 14. (C) Double tracking, on November 3 the Charge also contacted MOFA Americas Director Yin Yin Oo to point out the usefulness of having a senior Ministry of Health official meet with Mr. Grove to discuss GF issues. In doing so, Charge discussed the USG points on GF with Yin Yin Oo, who promised to press for a meeting. Charge followed up on November 7, but there was no news.

The Deputy Health Minister

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¶ 15. (C) At 3:15 p.m. on the afternoon of Saturday, November 8, day one of the Grove visit, MOFA Protocol phoned to inform the Embassy that Dr. Mya Oo, Deputy Minister of Health, had flown down from Nay Pyi Taw to meet with Grove at 3:00 p.m. The Deputy Minister was waiting at the Nurses' University in Rangoon. The message reached Grove and Charge during a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Burma. The meeting with the Deputy Minister and a cast of a dozen other Health Ministry officials began at 4:00 p.m. and lasted about an hour. (Note: the "Keystone Kops" aspect of the GOB scheduling effort did not escape Mr. Grove's attention.)

¶ 16. (C) In the meeting with the Deputy Minister, Mr. Grove left GF discussion to the Charge, who clearly reiterated Ref B and C points. Grove later confirmed the message was clearly stated. When the Deputy Minister proposed that the USG should convey its views through the MOFA diplomatic channel, the Charge acknowledged having discussed the issue with MOFA but pointed out that the USG views reflect GF application requirements for Burma that are being considered in the CCM process. The Deputy Minister proposed that, while he can give assurance the Health Ministry will do everything in its power to conform to GF rules and regulations, some issues are beyond Health Ministry control and are within the purview of the Ministry of Finance and others. Charge responded that it is the Government of Burma that puts forward a GF proposal, not simply the Health Ministry, so all elements of Government need to be on board with any assurances provided. On the flow of funds, the Deputy Minister said the Government of Burma accepts that not even a penny of GF assistance is to flow through the Government. He vowed that the Health Ministry will make every effort to provide all the assurances necessary for a successful GF application.

¶ 17. (C) The next morning (November 9), when Mr. Grove and Charge arrived at the Rangoon airport for a helicopter trip to observe post-cyclone Nargis relief operations, the Deputy Minister of Health was in the departure lounge waiting for his return flight to Nay Pyi Taw. During the ensuing twenty-minute conversation, the GF was discussed briefly; the Deputy Minister mainly used the time to describe his ministry's efforts to meet the health needs of the people of Burma.

Comment

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18. (C) There can be no doubt: the Burmese Ministry of Health has received loud and clear the USG's points about a prospective GF application. Now that the application deadline for Round 9 has slipped from January to May 2009, the CCM has more time to address the need for GOB assurances -- coordinated throughout the government -- prior to Burma's submission of a new GF application. We believe the Health Ministry will do its best to deliver on any commitments made.

However, a reality is that others at higher levels hold the real power in Burma, and, even if the intentions are good, the regime's "Keystone Kops" bureaucracy makes the fulfilling of promises uneven at best. Despite such concerns, the Three Diseases Fund (3DF) donors consider their program a success. Such assistance clearly saves many lives in Burma and offers public-health protection to the broader region. A separate reporting cable will describe Mr. Grove's visit to Rangoon, including several other meetings in which Mr. Grove heard from NGOs, bilateral donors, the UN, and others about how the 3DF has been operating in Burma and how a renewed GF might operate successfully here.

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